

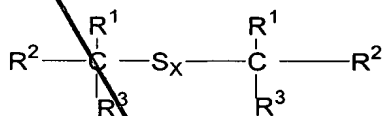
In the Claims:

Kindly amend the claims as follows:

Please cancel Claims 1-3 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Sub B1  
A  
4. (Amended) A process for preparing a masticated rubber mixture comprising the steps of adding a masticating agent comprising a dialkyl polysulfide to a rubber mixture, then mixing the masticated rubber with rubber chemicals and/or fillers and then optionally adding vulcanizing agents to the masticated rubber mixture,

wherein said dialkyl polysulfide is a polysulfide of the formula



wherein

R<sup>1</sup> to R<sup>3</sup> are identical or different and represent a linear or branched C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>18</sub>-alkyl radical or represent hydrogen and

x represents the numbers 3 to 5.

5. (Amended) A process according to Claim 4, wherein said dialkyl polysulfide is used in amounts of 0.1 to 10 phr, based on the total amount of said rubbers to be masticated.

6. (Amended) A process according to Claim 4, wherein said rubber is selected from the group consisting of natural rubber (NR), styrene/butadiene copolymers (SBR), acrylonitrile/ butadiene copolymers (NBR), ethylene/propylene copolymers (EPDM) and fluorohydrocarbon rubbers.

Sub B1  
cont  
8. (Amended) A process according to Claim 4, wherein said dialkyl polysulfide is used in conjunction with metal-containing heterocyclic ring compounds.

~~9~~ (Amended) A process according to Claim 4, wherein prior to mixing with said rubbers, said dialkyl polysulfides are absorbed onto a solid inert carrier.

*cancel*  
*sub B*  
*cont.*

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